

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00758 281559Z

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A)

SUBJ: ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE STATEMENTS AND TOAST

REF: STATE 044052

1. ARRIVAL STATEMENT:

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE BACK IN DAMASCUS. I LOOK FORWARD TO TALKS WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM IN OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A DURABLE AND EQUITABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THE AREA.

2. TOAST FOR LUNCHEON:

MR. FOREIGN MINISTER, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS: TO BE WITH MY SYRIAN FRIENDS IS ALWAYS ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF ANY TRIP TO THE AREA. I BELIEVE THERE IS AN ARAB PROVERB WHICH URGES US TO "SAVE THE LARGE LUMPS OF COAL FOR THE CHILLS OF MARCH." THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW PROVERBS OF SYRIA, I BELIEVE, WHICH IS NOT SUPPOSED TO CONCEAL ANY SUBTLE POLITICAL MESSAGE.

WE LAST MET TOGETHER ON THIS TERRACE FOR LUNCHEON LAST MAY, SOME DAYS BEFORE FINAL AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE TERMS OF DISENGAGEMENT. THAT WAS A TIME I RECALL WHEN I HAD TO ALMOST PHYSICALLY RESTRAIN MY FRIEND THE
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 00758 281559Z

FOREIGN MINISTER FROM IMPETUOUSLY AGREEING WITH EACH

AND EVERY ONE OF MY PROPOSALS AND RUSHING TO SIGN THAT AGREEMENT. MY VISIT TO DAMASCUS A FEW WEEKS AGO WAS MY TWENTIETH TO SYRIA. SO THIS IS MY TWENTY-FIRST AND I SUPPOSE IT SYMBOLIZES MY COMING OF AGE IN SYRIA AND SYRIAN WAYS.

I CAN NOW SPEAK IN FULL WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE OF YOUR HOSPITALITY AND, IN ALL SINCERITY, OF MY PLEASURE IN THE GROWING TIES BETWEEN YOUR COUNTRY AND MINE. OUR DISCUSSIONS IN THE SYRIAN CAPITAL, IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, ARE OF THE MOST VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE. SYRIA'S ROLE IS AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN INDISPENSABLE TO THE QUESTION OF PEACE AND WAR IN THIS AREA. WE BOTH KNOW THAT THERE ARE COMPLICATED QUESTIONS TO WORK OUT BEFORE THE GOAL OF A JUST AND DURABLE PEACE CAN BE ACHIEVED, A GOAL WHICH AMERICANS DEEPLY DESIRE AND SHARE IN FULL WITH SYRIANS. I AM CONFIDENT THAT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING WHICH WE HAVE GAINED OF EACH OTHER IN THE PAST MONTHS, WE WILL TOGETHER FIND WAY TO MOVE THESE QUESTIONS AHEAD TO SOLUTION. IT HAS BEEN A GREAT PLEASURE AND SATISFACTION TO ME TO SHARE THESE HISTORIC MOMENTS WITH MY SYRIAN FRIENDS. I ASK YOU TO RAISE YOUR GLASS TO PRESIDENT ASAD.

3. DEPARTURE STATEMENT:

WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM WE HAVE HAD A CAREFUL REVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE AREA AND OF THE SYRIAN POSITION REGARDING A NEXT STEP TOWARD PEACE. WE HAVE AGREED TO REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH IN THE DAYS AHEAD AS ALL PARTIES IN THE AREA EXPLORE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES IN THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS.
MURPHY

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